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In effort to prevent fatalities, MSHA issues alert to mining community *Mine deaths are not inevitable, says agency head*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration today issued a fatality alert to the mining community profiling the causes of and circumstances surrounding the 71 fatal accidents that occurred last year.

“2010 will be remembered for the dramatic explosion that killed 29 men at the Upper Big Branch Mine and for the deaths of 42 other miners across the nation whose lives ended in needless tragedy,” said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. “We can — and must — honor all of these miners by increasing our efforts to ensure safe and healthy workplaces for our nation’s miners.”

Of the 71 deaths in 2010, 48 occurred in coal mines. Twenty-three occurred at metal and nonmetal operations, and nearly half of those victims were contractors. Excluding the 29 miners who died at Upper Big Branch, preliminary information indicates that more than half of the remaining 42 deaths involved violations of the “Rules to Live By” standards, found at <http://www.msha.gov/focuson/RulestoLiveByII/RulestoLiveByII.asp>, and represent the same causes of deaths that have occurred frequently over the past 10 years.

“We must all learn from these tragedies and act to prevent additional fatalities,” said Main. “Fatalities are not inevitable. They can be prevented using effective safety and health management programs, workplace examinations for hazards, and effective and appropriate training so that miners recognize and understand the hazards, and how to control or eliminate them.”

MSHA has posted summary information on its website, <http://www.msha.gov>, identifying causes of the mining fatalities that occurred in 2010, best practices to prevent them, posters for mine operators to print and display in their organizations, and other information on preventing fatalities in mining workplaces. Fatal investigation reports, once completed, are also available at that site.

Among the causes of death in last year’s mining fatalities:

- Seven metal/nonmetal miners died in powered haulage accidents. Four surface coal mine truck drivers were killed in powered haulage accidents when they lost control of their trucks and either struck another truck, turned over the truck, or the truck went through a berm and over a highwall.
- Six coal miners were killed working in close proximity to mining or haulage equipment.
- Six coal miners and two metal/nonmetal miners were fatally crushed by roof falls and rib rolls.
- Six metal/nonmetal miners and two coal miners died when they were struck by falling material or moving objects.

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